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CAREER TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR TO SENIOR IN BASKETBALL PLAYERS

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was to investigate what factors affect basketball players in the transition from junior and amateur to senior and professional sport respectively. The study was a qualitative research which uses a semi-structured interview to get the data. There were interviewed five Spanish basketball players who were starting playing in a team of Basketball Club Association (C.B.A.). The results showed that the participants face several changes both in the sport and in the life outside sport. At the same time, the results indicated the existence of several coping strategies that help the player in his career transition.

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Introduction

The talent development in sport has been studied by several authors in the last years (e.g.; Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999; Sáenz-López, Ibáñez, Giménez, Sierra & Sánchez, 2005) as well as how is the transition from one stage to other (Stambulova, 1994, 2003) or the influence of other important domains of life (psychological, psychosocial and academic level) in the development of the athlete (Wylleman, Alfermann & Lavallee, 2004).

The concept of transition is related to the occurrence of any event which brings about a change in assumptions about both oneself and the world, these require a change in one's behaviour and relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). Stambulova (2003) stated that the demands of sport transition generate an inner conflict between that the person is and what he or she wants to be or ought to be; stimulating them to mobilize resources to overcome this stage. The transitions could be normative, easily predictable (transition from junior to senior sport); or non-normative, generally unpredictable and involuntary, i.e., a season-ending injury (Bruner, Munroe-Chandler & Spink, 2008; Wylleman et al., 2004). Overcoming the transitions depends on: a) the characteristics of the person; b) the perception of the transition; and c) the characteristics of the environment before and after the transition (institutional support, family support...).

The most studied transition is the sport retirement (e.g.; Cruz, Torregrosa & Sánchez, 2004; González & Bedoya, 2008). There are few studies that investigate transitions during the sport career (Brunner et al., 2008; Giacobbi et al., 2004). Čačija (2007) pointed several sport factors in basketball: a) the tougher physically demand in the training sessions, b) the need of proving skill all the time; c) tougher mentally; d)

a new relationship with the coach; e) a reduction of responsibility in the team; and f) everything is stricter. Moreover, the players also experimented some demands outside sport: a) forced to plan better; b) changes of residence; c) university studies; and d) changing environment in high performance. To throw over these demands, the players relied on their social network (friends, parents, mates and their actual coach or previous one); their individual characteristics (mentally, the ability to plan their activities and establish new relationships); and the economic support (parents, federation...). Another support consists of doing other activities outside sport which cause them positive feelings. So, the purpose of this study has been to analyse the set of factors that are involved in the career transition from junior and amateur to senior and professional basketball players.

Method

A qualitative methodology was utilized, using the semi-structured interview to collect the data (Patton, 2002). The sample have been composed of five basketball players. The criteria to be picked out for the study were: a) to be an age between 17 and 22 years old; b) to have played with the national team; c) to train two days per week with a C.B.A. team at least; d) to have entered into a contractual agreement with the club; and e) to be considered as a promising future player (Čačija, 2007; Sáenz-López et al., 2005).

An experienced group in qualitative methodology reviewed the script of the interview. The interviews were recorded to transcript them. The analysis of the interviews were realized according to Côté, Salmela, Baria, and Russell (1993). The themes of the interviews were identified as units of meaning. According to the process

of the authors, these units of meaning were reviewed for clustering them around labels, then around properties, and finally around categories.

The analysis trustworthiness has been established by an independent expert from the classification of a random sample of the participants answers.

Results

The basketball players interviewed pointed the tougher demand and seriousness when they train with a C.B.A. team, not only cause the high level of concentration required, but the tougher physically as well. "The training sessions are very hard, they required both mental and physical effort" (J4).

Another factor showed by the participants of this study was the different role they have when they train with the first team. Everyone have far less responsibility in the senior team. "The role change, cause you go over from being the most important player who take the responsibility in key situations in the EBA, to the dupe of the first team." (J1).

Our results pointed that the relationship between the coach and the player is also different, the relationship changes to be more distant and professional. "You don't get in so much touch with the C.B.A. coach as the previous coaches." (J3).

Outside the sport, the participants stated that the most difficult thing they faced to keep on their sport career were the residence change. "It was a huge change for me to move to another country,... The first months, it was very hard to live alone, cook myself, to be always alone" (J3).

Every basketball players stated they have less leisure time cause the increase of training sessions. As a result, it is more difficult to be able to keep both sport and studies at the same

time. "The more you train, the more you waste for studying. Sometimes, it is very hard to get home and have to study" (J5).

All the participants emphasized the importance of their nearest social context (family and friends) supporting them in their sport career. "My parents help me a lot, my brother still more, and to realize that everybody trust in you and everything will be all right" (J4).

Discussion

In the sport context, the most important changes experimented by the interviewed players were: a) the high level of demand and seriousness in the training sessions, where there is a tougher physical demand (Čačija, 2007); b) a change in the role team, having less responsibility (Čačija), this could decrease the confidence of the player (Bruner et al., 2008); and c) a change in the relationship with his coach, being more distant and professional. Outside sport, two levels are affected: the academic and the social level. As the results of other studies (Giacobbi et al., 2004; Pummell, Harwood & Lavallee, 2008), the players pointed the difficult of keeping the studies and sport at the same time. The players have less leisure time available so they have problems to (Bloom, 1985; Stambulova, 1994) these get worse cause they move to another residence (Bruner et al.; Stambulova).

The principal factor for getting a positive transition is the family (Čačija, 2007; Wylleman et al., 2004), joined to the friends and mates support (Pummell et al., 2008). Finally, the self confidence is a fact emphasized by the participants of his study according to other investigations (Bruner et al., 2008; Čačija).

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